

A LETTER
FROM
JOHN CARTWRIGHT, Esq.
TO A
FRIEND AT BOSTON,
IN THE
COUNTY OF LINCOLN;

AND TO ALL OTHER
Commoners who have Associated in Support of
THE CONSTITUTION.

"Philosophers of Europe, venerable Englishmen, be not
offended at the freedom with which a man who reveres,
who admires you, dares to speak of your government. I
only seek your ease, in laying open your wounds."

Filangieri.

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1793.

G.W. MEADLEY.

A LETTER

JOHN C. MEADLEY, JR.

PRINTED AT BOSTON



(Continued from page 1)

THE CONSTITUTION

Principles of the Constitution of the United States, as they have been modified by the various amendments, and as they are now understood by the people of the United States. By John C. Meadley, Jr.

NEW YORK

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C. W. MEADLEY

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ADDRESS

TO THE

Rev. SAMUEL PARTRIDGE, M.A.

VICAR of Boston in the County of Lincoln;

And One of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace within the
said County:

Brathurst Farm, Jan. 28, 1793.

DEAR SIR,

AS since my residence in the neighbourhood of Boston, notwithstanding our frequent difference of opinion on political questions, you have honoured me with a share of your friendship; and as I persuade myself that whenever, on either politics or other subjects, we may, hereafter, in any degree differ in our sentiments; you never will attribute either my opinions or my conduct, to immoral motives, it is with great pleasure

sure that I address myself to you on the present occasion.

By so doing, I by no means wish, on one hand, to insinuate a presumption, that on this occasion, you will coincide in all my opinions ; nor, on the other hand, to impose on you the task of replying to such of them as you may not subscribe to. I merely address myself to you as to a candid friend, who can differ in opinion with a man without making him an object of anger or ill-will ; a mode of differing, which, in this day of agitation, deserves to be held up as an example. It is the shortest path to a reconciliation of opinions, where that is possible ; and a most efficacious preservative of public and private peace.

For the latter part of my life, Sir, I had fondly imagined, that, whatever might be the dispositions towards me of those powerful persons in this country, who are immediately and deeply interested in those abuses and corruptions of our constitution, which it has been my political employment to detect and expose, and for which, I trust, that I have also pointed out the constitutional remedy* ; yet, that I might safely reckon upon having the favourable opinion and good wishes of all men who understand and sincerely value our constitution, as well

* See the People's Barrier against undue Influence and Corruption.

as of the generality of my disinterested and honest fellow citizens. Their cause I have espoused; their rights I have defended. And for this cause, I suppose it is, that I have been marked out for obloquy, by persons not very friendly to public freedom.—No sooner, Sir, was my back turned, a few weeks ago, in order to accompany my wife in paying the last filial duties to a dying parent, than Calumny, with her thousand tongues, instantly filled the country with unnumbered reports, as base as they were illiberal, as malicious as they were false.—According to some, I had been apprehended for seditious and treasonable practices *,

* Since this Letter went to the press, two other distinct reports, circulated with much industry, have come to my knowledge. By one of them, it was said that I was ruined in my affairs, and all my property was selling up; by the other it was positively asserted, that I was become insane, and was sent to a mad-house. When it is known to the reader, that in agriculture I give constant employment to near fifty families, exclusive of occasional multitudes; that in manufacture, I am the largest proprietor of a large work, employing some hundreds of persons; and that on these foundations, I have in commerce a considerable capital afloat; and when he is farther informed, that these last mentioned reports were eagerly transmitted into a part of Yorkshire, where some of my nearest relations reside; he will judge of the charitable spirit in which they were propagated. It would have been equally manly, and far more politic, to have assassinated or poisoned me at once. I could not then have pleaded any longer for that Reform, which is so hateful to some men. While so employed, I shall ever consider calumny as compliment; and attacks on my fortune and character, as the triumph of my arguments.

and

and lodged in Newgate: others honoured me with an apartment in the Tower; while others again named as my abode, the King's Bench, and other prisons. One report, it seems, stated that I had fled northwards, the messengers of government being close in pursuit; and another, that I had escaped to France. For aught, Sir, that I know, this may be but a scanty detail of the falsehoods on this occasion. Be this, however, as it may, my presence now must give the lie to the whole catalogue of these reports, and bring shame upon their authors. Little, Sir, did these men know me, or they would have saved themselves from the disgrace of these inventions. And as my honest neighbours, in general, shall know more of me, they will know, in future, how to treat with contempt such feeble attacks upon my reputation. So far, Sir, am I from wishing that any part of my political conduct might be kept in the dark; that it would be my pride to have it known and understood by every man in our island. It has been a conduct that, I trust, would not merely vindicate me from base insinuations of criminality towards my country, but would place me on the high and honourable ground of sincere and conscientious patriotism. Without being a courtier, and unknown amongst such men, I have personally presented faithful, though not flattering, advice to majesty. I have not, forgetful of
popular

popular rights, ever been the champion of mere royalty, as if royalty itself were a constitution; but when I have seen, as I thought, royalty in our government really in danger, I have, more than once, when there were no associations in its favour, exerted my humble powers in its defence.—But, Sir, at the same time that I have defended royalty in its constitutional rights, I ever have reprobated and opposed, and ever shall reprobate and oppose, all incroachments of the crown upon the rights of the people. Thus fortified in a conduct truly constitutional, to accusation I bid defiance; on slander I look down with contempt. Even to most of the present associators, I believe that I can say with truth, “For years that you have slept, I have watched for the constitution.—If you now, strong in the countenance of the great and your own collective numbers, have merit in combating a few weak adversaries, in defence of the regal part of our constitution, I claim the honour of having not only defended the same branch of government against adversaries more powerful: but *in defence, likewise, of the people’s share in that government.* I have for many years, and in company at some times with only an handful of firm, honest, men, waged a toilsome war with parliamentary corruption, its lordly patrons, its

“mini-

“ ministeral protectors, and all its servile
 “ adherents; a laborious contest, in which
 “ many (the present minister I fear, for one)
 “ have deserted, many have drooped, and
 “ many sunk down in despair.

Having been, Sir, as far as I know, the first who made the defects in parliamentary representation, together with a systematic and constitutional reform thereof, the subject of a distinct treatise; although others with more genius have since taken the field, mine, I have the satisfaction to feel, has been a post of some honour. At the period when I thus appeared in the vanguard of reform, faint indeed was the prospect of success. The cause, however, wanting only a diffusion of the genuine principles of our constitution, its certain triumph in due time was then to be foreseen. THAT TRIUMPH IN BRITAIN IS NOT FAR DISTANT. In *Ireland*, it is in a manner already secured.—The Irish House of Commons has passed its vote for a committee to inquire into the state of the *Irish* representation. It is an inquiry that must end in reform. The legislative eye cannot in solemn form, and in the presence of an anxious nation, be cast upon such a picture of Irish wretchedness, without a correction of the evils it must behold.

After what has been said, some who shall see this Letter may ask, “ Has he any objections
 “ to sign the declaration and resolutions entered

“tered into by the association of the district
 “in which he lives, and which met at Boston
 “on the 9th of this month?”

When gentlemen associate as you, my dear Sir, and others have done, with the best intentions for the public good, they are undoubtedly entitled to great respect; and when I cannot join in such an union of the respectable part of my neighbourhood, I should be destitute of feeling if it did not give me sincere concern. Nevertheless, as associations are in their own nature voluntary, and on such occasions as the present ought to be scrupulously considered; I trust that no man will be condemned for not travelling to the goal of constitutional freedom, in precisely the same road that others have taken, how numerous soever they may be. I trust, also, that while the objects of different travellers are alike, each will in perfect charity and peace, permit the rest to take the road they most approve. It would be a tacit reflection on the candour of my friends and neighbours in the association, if I thought it necessary on this occasion to assign reasons for the exercise of my own freedom of action. It is not, therefore, because I think it necessary—but because I desire to give my reason, that I shall do so. How many I might assign for not subscribing to a paper of considerable length, it is needless to consider: I shall therefore state only such as are prominent in my mind.

B

They

They are as follows :

1st, Because I was the composer and mover, many years ago, of that Declaration of Rights which you know makes part of the furniture of my dining room ; the first proposition of which is, " That the right of " making laws for this realm, is by the con- " stitution lodged in the hands of king, lords " of parliament, and the representation of " the commoners or commons".

If the associations of the present day have at this particular time, any merit in taking that proposition as the very basis of their proceedings, and as the rock on which they take their stand, in order to counteract certain opinions of Mr. Paine ; I was still before-hand with them. About six months before the first of these associations appeared, in no less than three several popular societies in London, with whom I had the honour to act, *and of one of which societies Mr. Paine was a member*, I AM THE PERSON who moved and carried for re-publication* the aforesaid Declaration of Rights, beginning with this very proposition †.

2dly,

* See the Declaration in the Argus of 15 May, 1792, and other papers about that time.

† Let this serve as an answer to all those enemies of reform, who are fond of associating my name with the proscribed name of Mr. Paine. If, with every other man in this kingdom who bestowed a thought upon public affairs, and who *could* read, I read the works of that writer, it was not that,

2dly, Because, when I contemplate the whole of the proceedings of your meeting of the 9th, I cannot but feel a doubt; how legal soever they may be, of their being in all respects truly in unison with the generous, manly, free spirit and genius of the British constitution. If, while that constitution very rightly restrained the licentiousness, it did not at the same time expressly cherish, protect, and encourage the liberty of the press, as an invaluable blessing; and authorise the free discussion of all political questions, particularly respecting the national government; as means of permanency to the state, and happiness to the people; it would not, I confess, in my opinion, be entitled to much of that admiration bestowed upon it by De Lolme and other writers; or which I have been accustomed to entertain of it myself.

that, to republican Paine, any more than to proclamation Pitt, I resigned my understanding. Of both I can sometimes approve, and sometimes disapprove. In reasoning, I acknowledge no authority but that of truth; nor any obligation but to those who teach it me. Had not Mr. Paine taught some truths, I do not imagine that his writings would have made quite so much noise as they have done. When my friend, Captain William Young of the navy, last summer spent some weeks with me, you know the report, that he was no other than Mr. Paine; but perhaps it may be news to you, that a few zealous persons, not far distant, were heard to declare, that if it should be ascertained to them that Mr. Paine was the man, "*they would burn down my house.*" What a happy expedient for enlightening my mind, and improving my love to the constitution!

gally, Because having long contemplated the abuses and corruptions actually existing in the most vital part of the constitution—meaning the representation of the commons ; and it being the settled conviction of my mind, that without a reform the constitution must perish ; I never can subscribe to general panegyrics on the constitution, where this enormous and most pernicious evil seems industriously to be kept out of sight ; since such unguarded and unqualified panegyrics have a tendency to mislead the public judgment on the point upon which. of all others, the people need most to be truly informed, as in the sequel of this letter will be shewn. If, Sir, I have the misfortune to vary in some shades of difference from the opinions of any of my neighbours, I nevertheless trust that my reasons, if not convincing, will yet be received with candor and indulgence. It is by a free and friendly interchange of opinions that truth is in time established ; and as an attachment to error is one of the greatest misfortunes which I can imagine, so shall I ever esteem the man who leads me to truth, on any subject important to human life and morals, as a most valuable friend.

You will perceive, Sir, that although I cannot subscribe to your Declaration, worded as it is, yet that we have no difference on what I presume you consider as its most essential part. And in respect to what relates

lates to the keeping of the peace, you will be assured that it must have my approbation; because, you well know that when, in the year 1791, a daring band of rioters in these parts had actually commenced the works of depredation and mob government, I was not amongst the last to tender to the magistrate my services; nor the least zealous and active in forming an association to resist them. And it is with pleasure that I can render to you and your brother magistrates, the praise of having on that occasion faithfully discharged your duty, in bringing the offenders to an exemplary punishment.

If I have not much approved, what I suspect to have been one of the motives of ministers for the extraordinary alarm spread through the country, yet I rejoice to find that, in one instance, it has had a happy and a constitutional effect. It has caused above two thousand merchants and tradesmen of London to train themselves to arms for defence of their city. If every association had followed up their resolutions for supporting the civil magistrate by a similar conduct, we should soon hear no more of mobs and riots; and our age and nation would no more be disgraced with such infamies as we all remember in the year 1780, and several times since, in *Birmingham* and other towns.

The

The associations having effectually chased away the phantom republicanism, those who were affrighted at that spectre may now rest in peace. As the interests of the *crown* and the *nobility* are therefore in perfect safety, the associators have now full leisure to turn their attention to *the remaining branch of the constitution*. Here, there is reason to believe, they will find, not merely, (as in the other case) a phantom of the imagination, but a disease that threatens the very springs of life. If danger to the other branches of the government did in truth exist, it must have been in mere embryo; and, as appears to me, within their own unaided means to have averted. No man will say that incroachment *had actually been made* upon them; or that the slightest violation of the least of their privileges *had even been attempted*. What privilege had the nobles lost? What prerogative of the crown had been wrested from it? Or were any of *their* rights undermined by unconstitutional acts of parliament? Or were any of the benefits of those rights defeated by any imposition, or fraud, or corruption practised by the people? No: Nothing of all this had happened. Not one tittle of the long catalogue of their honours, their rights, their privileges, their powers or prerogatives *had been touched*. They were, and they still are, in the possession and enjoyment

joyment of them all. In their respective stations, they have, therefore, the full benefit of the constitution. To them, it is indeed a constitution deserving of all praise. They have no complaint to make. What the constitution intended them to be, *that they are*. The king is, in his own person, *one component part* of the legislature, with undivided majesty, and an independent will. The peers, in like manner, have *a second share* in the legislature to themselves, independent and uncontrolled. None can partake with his Majesty in *his* share of enacting laws. That power he exercises either in person or by representatives * of *his own choosing*; and to *the duration of their power he sets what bounds he sees fit*. Neither can the power of the lords, or the limitation of the proxies who occasionally *represent* them, be partaken or invaded. *It is not possible for the commons to foist into the seats of the nobles a single creature of their own*. If then, so far as his Majesty and the nobles are concerned, all is honesty and fair dealing; if, respecting them, the letter and the spirit of the constitution are in perfect harmony; shall we not demand that, with regard to the COMMONS, the same honesty and fair dealing, the same literal interpre-

* His Commissioners for giving assent to acts of parliament.

tation,

tation, and the same substantial enjoyment shall take place!—Here, my worthy friend, let us pause.—The enquiry on which we are about to enter, is awful and momentous. On the issue must depend the salvation, or the ruin of our country.—Here it is, that will be shewn who are they that best understand that constitution, which is the object of our solicitude; and who are they that truly seek to establish a government by *king, lords, and commons*. It is on all hands admitted, that the people are not made for the government, but the government for the people. It must therefore be also admitted, that such is the transcendent superiority of the *commons* or *people*, to the other two branches of the government, that it is merely for the sake of THE PEOPLE that *royalty* and *nobility* make parts of the constitution at all. If this be true, with what a sacred regard to the rights of the people, ought their branch of the legislature ever to have been preserved! Its purity should be as snow; its freedom, and its independence unsuspected. These qualities it can only receive by emanating spontaneously from *the whole people*, by being a fair, an equal, and a complete representation of them; and renewable at their pleasure.—Here then, my dear Sir, I conjure you and every associator, not to shrink from a painful

ful duty; but to have the courage to look into the state of the representation of your country; and honestly to examine it by *the line and the rule of the constitution*. If it would square by that line and that rule, all would be well; and happy would it be for Britain. But if it shall be found out of all shape, and form, and rule; if, at the sight of it, your sense of justice shall recoil; and your regard for decency be shocked; and if you shall see in it the latent, and not very distant, subversion of our liberties, unless that representation be reformed; then, am I confident that there will be but one sentiment amongst us. With one voice we shall say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's;" and UNTO THE PEOPLE THE THINGS THAT BELONG TO THE PEOPLE.

I am prepared, Sir, to hear some person say, 'But this is exciting discontents.' I dispute not upon words. Our argument is too important for such trifling. My reply is, that it is imitating the well-intended example of the associators. I give *an alarm of danger*, that my countrymen may be excited and animated by their wisdom, their spirit, their unanimity, and their love *of* the *constitution*, to meet that *danger*, and ~~of~~ to remove its cause.

When we see that constitution in a danger the most perilous; and in a danger

which admits not of disproof*, it is our duty to give alarm, and to call for help. What should we say of a son, who seeing his aged sire stretched on the ground, mangled by assassins, and nearly expiring with loss of blood; and who, under pretence of *not disturbing the tranquility of the family*; should neglect to bind up his wounds, and to call aloud for aid and for medicine? No consistent associator will be disposed to recommend so impious an example. From my fellow-husbandmen, we learn an example more worthy of imitation; when the soil is full of the seeds of unprofitable plants, it receives a preparatory *stirring*. The weeds, which may be aptly called, *the griefs of the land*, obedient to the call of the judicious husbandman, come forth in full vegetation. *They are then easily and quietly removed to the land's relief*, and possession of the soil is given to the good seed alone. As political husbandmen, therefore, let us go and do likewise. If there be political griefs in our land, let them be properly called forth, in order that they may be peaceably and effectually removed.

Will any one say, that there is no cause for discontents, or that discontents do not

* See the Report of the Committee of the Society of the Friends of the People, associated for obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, on the State of the Representation of the People in Parliament.

abound?—Where is the corner of the kingdom, how obscure soever, where the wretched state of our parliamentary representation is unknown, or undeplord? Here, alas! is cause indeed for discontents, which no associations, no exertions, no power under heaven can remove, but by the means of a REFORM.

I hope our understandings will no more be insulted by that old pretence, that *this is not the time*. What! not the time; when all men are called upon, and canvassed man by man, to declare that with their lives and fortunes they will support *the constitution upon its true principles*!—And when at the same time all the power and property in the kingdom is associated, and the whole militia is under arms, for securing the public peace! There never was a time so safe and so fit. By every principle that can bind an honest man, every associator is bound to reform: A pledge to reform, if reform be wanted, is in the very essence of his enagement to the public. If under a general pledge to support the constitution, it be a duty to *prevent* incroachments that may possibly be made, surely to *correct* incroachments made already, must be doubly a duty? Under our present security to the peace, to talk of a fear of disturbances from moving the question of reform, would be in a two-fold sense to offer an insult to our understandings. Insurrection, in

the *first* place, if there were any disposition to it, never had so ill an opportunity ; and, *secondly*, as reform must cure the discontents respecting representation, and a corrected representation must cure all other curable distempers in the state, so it is evident that to move the question of reform must give satisfaction to all men, except to the few who make a trade of our liberties.

Besides, how does this objection against *the time*, apply in *England*, while in *IRELAND* it is scouted? There, indeed, the whole country was in a state of avowed discontent, threatening serious consequences ; and a reform in the representation of that kingdom *has been adopted*, as the only true secret and charm for calming the agitations of the public mind. To say that a reform in Great Britain ought to be resisted, were as much as to say, that serious, well-founded discontents ought to remain ; and that, how fully soever the *king* and the *lords* ought to be made easy respecting *their* rights under the constitution ; *the people* ought to have solid ground of dissatisfaction and complaint remaining amongst *them*. But this will not be the language of any conscientious associator who has undertaken to support the constitution, and who has represented it, that is, in theory, as a model of political perfection, worthy of the people's warmest attachment. No: between the *king*, the *lords*, and the *commons*, every upright associator

sociator will hold a steady, even balance; and do strict justice to each. At the same time - hat he, *being one of the people*, means to act fairly by *royalty* and *nobility*, he cannot mean to give them *more* and the people *less* than their respective shares in the government; and he will spurn at the thought of being himself cajoled into a dupe, for undermining that part of the constitution where his own rights, and all that is dear to him is deposited. While he so affectionately steps forward to guard the rights of the *crown* from even the very apprehension of attack; will he shut his eyes to the criminal existence of *treasury boroughs*, and to the violation of decency, in a long list of members of the People's House of Parliament holding enormous emoluments under the *crown**? While the associator *who, as one of the people*, so honourably, and so disinterestedly interposes his shield to protect the ungrateful *peerage* from the darts of republicanism, can he without indignation hear, that *eighty-eight* seats in the House of Commons, are become mere appendages to the estates of certain *noblemen*, while *seventy-two* more, by means of influence, are notoriously at their command; making together ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY

* The vote in the Irish House of Commons for a Committee to enquire into the State of the Representation, has been accompanied with leave to bring in a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, and a Responsibility Bill.

SEATS filled by the creatures of the lords*† and under what other class than that of the aristocracy, will reason and fact permit him to arrange those wealthy borough-holding commoners, who equally command ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE SEATS MORE†? While you, my dear Sir, of the associations, tell us how perfect and how excellent our constitution is, are you aware that it has sustained so alarming a violation—a violation which in effect destroys its essence and defeats its end? Will you by your language invite the whole fraternity of the borough-brokers to turn you into ridicule? Will you refuse to hear, or to see, when boroughs are hawked about, or put to auction? Or will you connive at the golden sons of the East, when they buy up seats of legislation in parcels? And if your House of Commons have been by its forms compelled quietly to enter upon its very journals, the Petition of an intre-

* There is reason to believe that this account is several short of the real number.

† —“ Seeing themselves already approaching, or at least in a situation of being one day incorporated in the rank of nobility, they must discover their own interest in defending its rights.” See *Science of Legislation*, p. 157.

If to the word “rights,” this writer added “and usurpations,” perhaps he would have done no violence to truth. Within the last ten years, nine of such borough-holding commoners have been created peers; and these nine place no less than *twenty-four* members in the House of Commons. See *Report on Representation*, p. 29.

pid man*, stating that the seats in that House “ are as notoriously rented and “ bought as the standings for cattle at a “ fair† ;” will you, I ask, who associate in support of our excellent constitution, think it a time to let such things pass without enquiry? These, my friend, are the flagitious practices, the true seditions, conspiracies, and treasons against the constitution, which Mr. Pitt *ought to have proclaimed* through the land ; and which, in most serious truth, now demand the vigilance of our associations ! These are the sellers and buyers who have prophaned the temple of our freedom, and made it a den of thieves ! These are the men who now feelingly say to one another, “ Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have “ our wealth ;” let us raise an uproar against *republicans* and *levellers*, or OUR CRAFT WILL BE IN DANGER.—As to *republicans*, Sir, let but the constitution, agreeably to its true principles, completely embrace *the rights and liberties of the people* by a fair representation, then will they have a government sufficiently republican to give them content. Do any in the *republic* of Poland, object to the existence of nobles, or of a king? The Spartan republicans, you know, so far from quarrelling with kings, chose to have even two at a time. With regard to *levellers*, or

* Mr. Horne Tooke.

† Jovis 9. Die Decembris, 1790.

persons aiming at an equal division of property, such men can only exist amongst the most abandoned and the most stupid. They have no countenance whatever from the modern doctrine of *equality of rights*, which respects justice, and the protection of industry and of talents, in the security of their acquisitions; as well as a denial of civil or political power until conferred by the public choice. As it is evident, that neither this equality, nor society itself could subsist, under such a system of *levelling* as hath absurdly, and I fear wickedly, been imputed to numerous bodies of men in this country; and as that republicanisin, without which no Englishman can be a friend to the constitution of his country, or pretend to define it a constitution embracing without exception the rights and interests of the PUBLIC, would be perfectly satisfied with a radical reform of parliament; so all those mighty dangers to be apprehended from *republicans* and *levellers*, of which we have heard so much, are, I presume perfectly chimerical. No; no; my friend, our real danger is not here: It is where I have just pointed out. It is from THOSE INSTRUMENTS OF THE CROWN, THOSE PEERS, AND THOSE BOROUGH-MONGERS, who have laid sacrilegious hands upon the people's share in the government, and have well-nigh taken away the whole foundations of the constitution! If, in truth, the House of
Com-

mons can in no honest, conscientious sense, be said to represent the people, but be appointed by other parties and interests, where, I ask, is our boasted constitution? Where is that government by king, lords, and COMMONS, in support of which we are so loudly called on to associate? A king I find, and lords I find; but it is to you, my friend, and to your brethren of the associations, that I must apply, to know where I am to find the COMMONS*? And as you seem to have studied the doctrine of *treason*, I want also to know, which is the greater treason of these three;—to pull down the king, confessedly set up *by* and *for* the people;—to drive the lords out of their house, in which they are seated *only* for the people's benefit;—or to destroy the COMMONS, constituting the very soul and body of our political existence; to which the king is the mere *band*, and the lords the *powdered hair* †, or what else you will, except any thing vital?

To such a degree are the proper foundations of our government actually removed, that some say *we have no constitution*; and some that *we have no political*

* I cannot find them in *the Report on the Representation*, to which I have already referred the reader.

† Mr. Burke calls nobility *the Corinthian capital of polished society*. *Reflections*, 206.

liberty *. If of our *threefold* constitution, any one of its members should be destroyed or palsied, would not that *threefold* constitution be actually subverted, although the outward form were to remain †? Reduce but his majesty to a lama, or any other cypher, and the word "king" may indeed remain, but there will be no other real powers in the government than aristocracy and democracy. Deny to the peers all share in legislation and judicial authority, and we may still retain the word "lord" in our language, but the *order* would be at an end: monarchy and democracy would be the only existing powers. In like manner, suffer but the crown and the lords so to

* Williams's Lect. on Pol. Prin. 148.

† "Despotic power," says the last cited author, "has been gradually introduced into republics, while their FORMS have been preserved." Augustus, whom none ever surpassed in the craft of establishing despotism on the ruins of liberty, perfectly understood the value of FORMS. Hence his re-establishment of the senate; and hence his care to give it dignity, respect, and authority in the eyes of the people. "Anxiously intent," says Filangieri, "on hiding amidst the clouds his omnipotent power, of veiling his irresistible strength from the view of his subjects, he chose to make a show of the office of the senate; rendering it in fact the instrument of executing decrees, dictated by himself. Far from imagining this assembly an obstacle to his views, or a counterpoise to his authority, he found it the support of his secret omnipotence, and the shield of his safety. We may be assured there is no despotism worse than that which is concealed under the veil of liberty."—See Gravina *de Romana Imperio*.

engross

engrofs the feats in the lower houfe of parliament, as to render that houfe a mere machine for executing their will, and we may ftill *talk* of commons, but we fhall be under a government of *king and nobles only*. Of what would in due time become the fituation of our country under *ſuch* a government, ſome idea may be formed from the frenzy of reſentment with which *ſuch* a government in France has been remembered. If therefore we really mean well towards a king and nobles, we fhall not ſuffer them to make themſelves oppreſſive and odious, as infallibly would be the caſe, were they once to get the whole government into their hands. And they on their part, if not under the influence of ſome ſtrong deluſion misleading them to their ruin, muſt foreſee, and dread, and avert the approach of that period, when it ſhould become a ſerious national queſtion, whether human happineſs were beſt provided for, under ſuch a government as that of Old Spain, or that of the United States of America. In the former of thoſe countries we behold a combined power, conſiſting of a ſuſpicious king, haughty grandees, and a cruel, inquiſitorial prieſthood; trampling on the degenerate deſcendants of thoſe high-minded Caſtilians and Arragoneſe who were once the pride of Europe. In the latter country, on the other hand, we perceive a nation, our own kindred, without

D 2

admitting

admitting into their government any of the orders I have mentioned, in full possession of those inestimable blessings, political, civil, and religious liberty. What a lesson, for teaching moderation in the exercise of power, and a sacred respect for the rights of the people, to the privileged orders of men in this country !

Could Englishmen, under the present circumstances, be so infatuated as to exhaust their own stock of loyalty in strengthening those who are already too strong ; in giving yet more to that crown and to that peerage, whose encroachments on the third branch of the legislature have already made such an alarming progress ; what a serious account must such inconsiderate Englishmen have one day to render to their betrayed country, for thus neglecting the sacred rights of themselves and fellow citizens ; for thus abandoning to usurpers the citadel of the constitution, the Commons House of Parliament !

The very able writer to whom I have referred the reader *, and whose work I earnestly recommend to your perusal, has furnished a complete answer to those who now promote the delusion of the day, by confounding *civil* liberty, which chiefly depends on the *administration of justice*, with *political* liberty, which rests on *being truly*

* Williams.

represented in the legislature. He reminds us of the arts practised under the administration of Lord North, in order to confound the understandings of the people, that he might delude them into a war against liberty; when, says he, "the retainers or advocates of that administration appealed to the experience of Englishmen throughout the world"——'Are we not (they said) in the secure possession of our *property*? Are we not in all cases tried by our peers, on *fixed* or *known* laws? What is civil liberty?'——"their readers were convinced; and the friends of the constitution imagined to have referred to speculative shadows." (p. 136.) *Civil* liberty he defines to be "the right of doing what the laws do not forbid." (p. 134.) And his definition of *political* liberty, is, "The condition of a whole people, secure from danger, or apprehension, in its collective relation to the government it has appointed." (p. 139.) He remarks that Liberty, in respect to the *citizen*, should be called civil, not political. This distinction is founded, not so much in etymology, as in the necessary arrangement of oeconomic truths. Government is to the collective body of the people, as the citizen is to government. If the people, collectively, were at the caprice of the administration; or if the business of the administration were continually interrupted

" rupted by the interference of the people,
 " there would be no *political* liberty : if the
 " individual or private citizen were at the
 " caprice of the magistrate superintending
 " them, there would be no *civil* liberty.
 (p. 135.) But it is to be observed, that
 although he defines *civil* liberty to be " the
 " right of doing what the *laws* do not for-
 " bid ;" he is careful to guard his readers
 against the error of admitting any thing to
 be true constitutional law, but what is really
 and properly *the collective reason and will of*
a free people legislatively declared. Montel-
 quieu having said (c. 3.) ' In a free state,
 ' or in a society directed by *laws*, liberty
 ' can consist only in the power of doing
 ' what we ought to will, and in not being
 ' constrained to do what we ought not to
 ' will ;' our author observes, " The defi-
 " nition is sufficiently vague, to admit of
 " despotism, *if it observe the forms of laws.*
 " Who may be judge of what we ought to
 " do? The laws. HOW ARE LAWS EN-
 " ACTED?—It is in the answer to this ques-
 " tion, we are to seek the nature of liberty,
 " either political or civil." (p. 130.) It
 has been said, that the administration of
 justice *according to law*, was very pure in
 the dominions of *Frederick the Great*, and of
Peter the Great ; but who ever heard of
 Prussian or of Russian liberty? We know
 that despots may observe their own edicts ;
 but it is an eternal truth, that there is no
 true

true freedom, political nor civil, where the people themselves make not the laws which are to be the rules of their conduct ; either personally, or through representatives, in whose appointment none but themselves have a voice or influence.

In former times, when the good people of this land were asked for money, to carry on wars, or even for the ordinary purposes of government, they had an old-fashioned custom of bargain-making on the occasion. They stipulated for a redress of grievances, or a confirmation of rights. Hence frequent reforms of abuse ; hence at successive periods was the Great Charter confirmed, and, as it were, revived, by no less than twenty-seven different acts of parliament. And, methinks, it would not at this time derogate from our wisdom, were we to call as loudly on the crown and the lords, to assert and support our rights ; as they have called on us to assert and support their prerogatives and privileges. That " fair play is fair play," has been a favourite adage with John Bull ; and perhaps he never had more occasion than at present to manifest to it his attachment. Honest John is not your man at deep political manœuvres. Being a downright honest generous fellow, and apt to place too much confidence in his upper servants, they have always had the means, and most of them had the inclination, to impose on him to a considerable degree.

When,

When, in order to divert John's attention from some serious reform that he has in contemplation, they pretend to see into plots where none exist ; and to smell out treasons for his destruction, that never had a being ; he, good man, is too apt to become the dupe of their artifice ; and the present attempt upon his understanding and patience seems to surpass every thing of the kind hitherto practised. Should the king's able and enterprising minister, the *quondam* champion of parliamentary reform, speechify John Bull into a mere champion for the exclusive rights of the crown and the lords, and persuade him to stake his life and fortune in their defence, while at the very moment, this same crown, and these same lords, whom he was thus to defend, were linked in a close and subtle combination, systematically and perseveringly carried on, for gradually worming him out of his whole inheritance, and for plotting his complete subjugation to their arbitrary will ; it would be but a sorry story for John to tell amongst his neighbours, who would be more apt to despise his folly, than to pity his misfortune.

But, to be serious ; for serious enough is the subject ; since I myself, as already stated in the early part of this work, have for one felt the effect of the impudent imputations of the minister and his echoes, of treasonable designs and practices having been carried on by persons and societies, known
for

for their attachment to the cause of freedom ; I must beg to have a little farther conversation with the reader on the subject of treason. Of treason, then, we must observe, there are two species ; one for which a man *may* be hanged ; another for which he only *ought* to be hanged ; that is, provided the hanging of criminals could do any good. But leaving the wisdom of hanging men, as one branch of the science which regards the moral improvement of mankind, for others to discuss, I proceed to observe, that *punishable* treason is only that which offends *the statutes in such cases made and provided* ; and that, although there be a treason of an higher nature, especial care has been taken, that there should be no statutes for its punishment. “ The first “ and highest treason,” says a noble and virtuous lawyer, “ is that which is committed against THE CONSTITUTION, and “ such crimes against the person and dignity of the supreme magistrate,” [alluding to statutable treasons] “ are only made “ and declared to be so, by reason of the “ capacity he is put into by the constitution, “ of preserving and defending the society ; “ and because it is needful, in order to the “ peace, welfare, and safety of the community, that he should be covered from all “ danger, and rendered sacred in his person, and inviolable in his regal honour, “ while he answereth the trust which the
E people,

" people, upon their assembling and uniting
 " into a body politic, committed unto him,
 " and does neither depart from the essential
 " and fundamental terms of the original
 " compact, nor from their necessary provi-
 " sions afterwards added, and enacted for
 " preserving the government in its primi-
 " tive state and frame. So that they nei-
 " ther are nor can be traitors, who endea-
 " your to preserve and maintain the consti-
 " tution ; but they are the traitors, who
 " design and pursue the subversion of it ;
 " they are the rebels that go about to over-
 " throw the government of their country ;
 " whereas such as seek to support and de-
 " fend it, are the truly loyal persons, and
 " do act conformable to the ties and obli-
 " gations of fealty. Nor is it merely the
 " first and highest treason in itself, that a
 " member of a political society is capable
 " of committing, to go about to subvert the
 " constitution ; but it is also the greatest
 " treason he can perpetrate against the
 " person, crown, and dignity of the king ;"
 &c.*

If now, my good friend, you and your
 associated brethren be desirous of hunting
 out these persons who are the real traitors
 of the times, perhaps I have helped to put
 you on the right scent. Mr. Pitt, before
 he was minister, was moved with much

* Lord Somers, p. 8.

holy indignation against the true subverters of our constitution, and made many pious professions in favour of reform; which he then thought was essential to the salvation of the state. And when, at a crisis particularly and personally interesting to the king, this model of youthful wisdom and virtue, accepted the proffered ruins of government, I have a very high and indisputable authority for believing, that, with regard to the great question of a parliamentary reform, then thought to be so near his heart, he was left free by his royal master to act according to his own discretion. Had ever statesman so glorious an opportunity of serving his king and country!—We know what followed. We know also, that the most overgrown borough-holders have since had their interests doubly fortified, by a translation of themselves to the House of Peers; while their power in the other House is taken good care of by deputies in whom they can confide. We know, moreover, that this son of Chatham has not only for these nine years past administered the government by the old system of corruption—*Vide* the Red Book and the Report on Representation—but that no sooner did he perceive a knowledge of our constitution, that must prove fatal to that rotten system, widely spreading amongst the people, than he artfully cried out—Sedition! Treason! Plots! Rebellion! and in-

stantly involved the country in a war when her every interest required peace. The next artifice was an attempt to implicate with the worst characters in France some of the best characters in England; and to begot a persuasion that men were dangerous to the constitution, in proportion as they were animated by a love of liberty. The flimsy and dirty cover under which this attempt to bully and hunt down all public spirit was made, answered well enough the purpose of the fraudulent moment; but the true drift of this Machivalian statesman begins to be seen through. Not a single plot, not a single treason has been brought to light; and his mischievous war will shortly be viewed in its true light. This commercial nation has already tasted the bitter fruit of his policy. She will not long consent to bleed and to suffer, in order to aggrandise despots, and to forge chains for herself. In one respect she is obliged to the minister. He has compelled her to THINK. When nations begin to think, it is time for arbitrary ministers to alter their plans. A statesman truly wise would foresee, that although by circumstances, a reform in this country may be somewhat accelerated or somewhat retarded, yet that its arrival ere long cannot be prevented by his arts. By opposing reform he may endanger the public tranquillity; but, unless he can eradicate from the human mind the faculty

faculty of thought, he cannot prevent its necessary effects.

Now, courteous Reader, if, from what I have said, you suppose that I bear any private animosity to the minister, or make his removal an object of my concern, you are widely mistaken. If you like him in the cabinet, why there let him stay. I have only to condition, that he be indeed the minister, and not the master of his country. With the pulling a minister down, or setting a minister up, my politics have nought to do. I have seen many changes of ministers, but no radical change of system. The Red Book has been the *vade mecum* of all; and all alike have been supported by majorities fabricated as I have shewn; and all alike must continue to govern on a system of corruption (which is a system of immorality and profusion, and pernicious in every view) *until the people shall have the chusing of their own parliament, and for their own time.* This is the object on which I wish to fix the attention of all associators. As Britons, understanding the nature and principles of our government; as persons of integrity, meaning to fulfil their engagement to the public; as men of honour, disdaining the imputation of playing off a party manoeuvre under the mask of patriotism; and, as Christians, conscious of the moral obligation of rendering justice to all men;—in each, and in all of these relations, I have
to

to put to the associators an important question, which they will do well to consider with due attention. You know, my learned friend, whom it was that asked, "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or, Take up thy bed and walk?" The question that I have to ask, equally precludes the possibility, as I conceive, of any one's answering it to his own conscience, otherwise than as I should wish.

• It is this: What is the difference between an association *to support the constitution*, and an association *to promote a parliamentary reform*?

If, *a constitution of king, lords, and commons*, be a phrase with any meaning; and if there be any sense in the words, "*The Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled*;" they must mean that one entire branch of the legislature belongs to THE COMMONS. If they did not mean this, you must admit that it would be the language of imposition; and, to speak with downright plainness, that it would be a cheat as palpable as it would be profligate. Who will dare to maintain, that in those phrases, the word "*Commons*" means that the House so called is to consist, for the major part, of persons in whose appointment the people of England are to have as little real influence as the peasants of Poland? Who will affirm that such appointment is to belong to the *minister of the crown, and the members of the aristocracy*,

aristocracy, who are the last persons on earth who ought to be concerned in it, and who cannot be concerned in it without criminality? The very idea, inseparable from representation, is that of a delegation *fairly, freely, and equally chosen* by the people. No truths can be more manifest. Do the *lords* in their branch of the legislature, suffer such injustice and absurdity as prevails in ours? Are a small part only of the nobles permitted to legislate, and the bulk of them totally excluded? Has any peer, because a particular old ruined castle is upon his estate, a right to as many votes as fifty, an hundred, or two hundred of his brethren? There is no such folly amongst them. I am here speaking of the Peers of Great Britain having a right to legislate. The same observation will hold good respecting the elections amongst the Scotch peers, when they appoint the sixteen who are to represent their body. The right of suffrage is equally enjoyed by all without distinction. With regard to a septennial duration of parliament, it would be grave trifling, to argue it upon any of those ridiculous pleas of state policy, or expediency, on which so much ingenious sophistry has been employed. It is a plain question of common sense, on which every man not an idiot is competent to judge. Should you, my friend, think it expedient that the mere act of hiring your
foot-

footman, should divest you of the power of dismissal for many years to come? What would be the condition of the merchant or of the banker, who after detecting his clerk in peculation and false papers, should still be obliged to leave in such hands his books, his cash, and his accounts, until the expiration of a seven years service?

Now, Sir, I beg you will notice the honourable treatment which, in a case of this kind, the *crown* not many years ago received from the *people*. When in the year 1784, it was thought expedient by ministers that the crown should not have the power of removing for a term of *four* years, a few only of its particular servants, the proposed East-India commissioners, the bare attempt to infringe in this small degree the independency of the crown, threw the whole kingdom into a convulsion: the ministry was removed; parliament was dissolved; and the people universally sided with the crown; although the servants in question were not to have been the king's *representatives in parliament* for passing laws. When then will the crown, shew its gratitude, by expressing a like tender regard for that control which the people have a right to hold over *their* servants!

You are now, my dear Sir, in possession of the ground on which I am ready to join you and every well-wisher to our country.

Set

Set but up the true standard of the constitution, inscribed with the word REFORM, and I shall be most happy in obeying the call. In respectful, yet manly petitions, let us pray the House of Commons to inquire into the state of national representation: and to do therein as the principles of the constitution may require. Redress in this essential point being obtained, partial associations will vanish; for the whole nation, as one man, must be an association in support of such a constitution as will then be that of Great Britain.

With much esteem and respect,

I remain,

DEAR SIR,

Yours very sincerely,

J. CARTWRIGHT.

F POST.

POSTSCRIPT.

As the preposterous unfairness of representation cannot be denied, it is the fashion to palliate it with arguments to persuade us, that *the government would be no better if representation were equal and complete.* No truly! Marvellous! Why then it seems, that we are much obliged to the *lords and nabobs*, who for *our good, and our profit*, have bought up so many boroughs at such a *vast expence to themselves!* As they understand the people's interest better than the people themselves, and, *from this expensive proof of their patriotism*, will be sure to prefer the people's interest to their own, how can our property and our liberties be in better hands! Had not the people better sell the whole House of Commons to them at once!

Another artful way of palliating the state of our representation, is to talk much of our national wealth and prosperity; we have it is true some wealth, we enjoy considerable prosperity, and thanks for them, not to ministers of state, but to the active industry and enterprising spirit of THE PEOPLE, shackled as they are both in agriculture and commerce by a variety of restrictions equally unjust and impolitic. Thanks also to *that knowledge of our right to freedom*, which teaches ministers some moderation, and the policy of studying so much of the people's interest as does not

too much interfere with their own. Thanks too to the trial by jury, and the good old common law of the land, which, Heaven be praised! were established before the borough-trade was introduced. I hope, however, that, as the means of supporting the government*, the clergy, and the poor, *an annual taxation exceeding the annual rent of all the land in the kingdom*, is not one of the proofs, that a House of Commons at the command of ministers, and lords, is a good thing. To men of plain sense it should seem, that if the stolen seats of the House of Commons are worth to the purchasers such vast sums as are given for them, they must be worth something to the right owners. We are not now discussing the *profit* and *advantages* of being truly represented, but OUR RIGHT to be so; or it would not be difficult to shew (although the office might be laborious) that between a House of Commons freely chosen by, and truly representing the people, and a House at the command of others, there would be as great a difference in favour of the people's PURSE, as such a change would evidently produce in favour of their RIGHTS. Such a consequence of such a change is ei-

* Under this head I include the payments for discharging the interest on the public debt; which I consider as the debt of government, but not of the people. Had the people been truly and completely represented, not a shilling of this debt need now to have existed.

ther self-evident, or to talk of a connexion between cause and effect would be ridiculous. Let us have but another war, another hundred millions sterling added to our debt, and our wool brought down again to ten shillings a tod, and then we may be very happy to hear that we are wealthy and prosperous. But in contemplating the benefits to flow from a reform of parliament, I do not confine myself to narrow views. In social order and obedience to the magistrate; in peace external and internal; in morals; in true religion; in mutual charity; in the wisdom of legislation; in national industry, wealth and population; in dignified policy at home and abroad; and in whatever ennobles a nation and exalts the character of man; in my humble opinion the change would be, as between a counterfeit coin and one of pure gold.

As our ministers are by no means backward in recommending to us a war with France, and as even private subscriptions are already set on foot, by way of feeling the national pulse; it therefore becomes incumbent upon individuals to reflect upon the subject. Let us then bestow a few thoughts upon the nature of *war*, of treaties, and of the *moral obligation* which a national treaty lays upon an individual of the contracting nation, voluntarily and actively to contribute towards the fulfilment of it. I will consider them separately and in order:

1. What then is WAR?

It is nation rising against nation for mutual carnage, until one of the nations overpowers the other; or until both nations, equally exhausted by taxes and misery, are become sober enough to agree to a peace. Good God! If this be war, what infatuation can drive men voluntarily and unnecessarily into it? What are the causes that can justify such an astonishing departure from the law of him, who says, "On earth, peace, good-will to men?"

Besides *self-defence*, or *the defence and emancipation of a people groaning under some grievous oppression*, can there be a just cause of war? But how far we may justly extend the doctrine of self-defence, so as to comprehend allies, is a nice question. And what degree of oppression will justify our taking up arms in defence of another people, is another nice question. But these are not all the political difficulties connected with the subject. We are duly to consider the means in our hands; and particularly what clear prospect we have of doing good; and so forth.

2. What is a national *treaty*, which ought to continue binding from age to age, until by mutual consent it be cancelled?

Under correction of deeper politicians I should say, *It is an expression of the will and consent of two or more nations, in an honest bargain for some good end, which is always just.*

So far as the justice of the end can be denied, or indeed very reasonably doubted;
and

and so far as there is a defect in the expression of the will and consent of the people themselves, given either personally, or by representatives freely chosen by them; so far original imperfection enters into the nature of the treaty.

Again; if at the time of entering into a treaty, the end be *just*; but through a change of circumstances become *unjust*; from the moment that it ceases to be just, the treaty becomes void.

3. What is the extent of the MORAL OBLIGATION, which a national treaty lays upon an individual, voluntarily and actively to contribute towards the fulfilment of it? *This, it is evident, must be measured by the degree of justice inherent in the treaty itself; and the degree in which such treaty was a true expression of national will and consent; given either by the people themselves, or by representatives freely chosen by them.*

Thus it seems that the matter lies within a narrow compass, and that a moral judgment on the subject is not so difficult to form as some may imagine. In reasoning as I have done concerning treaties, I am not at all solicitous about what is to become of the vast collection of them in the cabinets of despots, or in the offices of the rulers of countries not in a true state of freedom. The sooner that every leaf of them shall be consigned to the flames, the sooner, perhaps, will the freedom, the peace, the true interests,

rests, and the happiness of mankind be established on a lasting basis. Did ever treaty bind a despot or a statesman, one moment longer than suited with his schemes of ambition! Treaties impose indeed very conveniently upon the honest people; and are amongst the sources of jobs and taxation. One or other of the voluminous collection will at any time furnish irrefragable reasons for peace, or unanswerable arguments for war, just as suits with the views of cabinets; and the corps diplomatique, a profound and mysterious order of men, are ever at hand to interpret them according to the order of the day. Had treaties been of any intrinsic value, universal peace must long since have prevailed throughout Europe. The truth is, they never can be of much value, until they shall answer the definition I have given of them *.

I come

* " We talk, however, of the law of nations, and what
 " is the definition of that law? Is it expressed in treaties?
 " Treaties are insidious agreements without sanction or
 " penalty; the most important parts generally formed of
 " secret articles to effect injurious measures. If we could
 " point out tribes of savages, where the disputes of individuals were terminated by private contracts, admitting
 " articles of combination to seize the property and take
 " away the lives of unoffending neighbours; we should
 " search the language for contemptuous or opprobrious
 " terms to consign them to general odium; or it might
 " suit our interest to enhance their misery, by converting
 " their persons into articles of inhuman commerce,
 " This

I come now to apply the foregoing principles to my own situation as an individual, in respect to the treaty which makes England a guarantee against the Belgians being allowed to navigate the great river of their country. Here I find myself in that species of moral dilemma, of which Paley in his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* gives instances. I will endeavour to state this dilemma fairly.

For the fulfilment of the Treaty.

1st, As an individual, the treaty of my nation, under the restrictions pointed out in the foregoing inquiry, lays me under a *moral obligation*, voluntarily and actively to fulfil it.

2^{dly}, England, at the time of making this treaty, was, according to the theory of its government, a free nation.

3^{dly}, When the Dutch, speaking through representatives chosen by themselves, shall cause their Stadtholder

Against the fulfilment of the Treaty.

1st, *Moral obligation* forbids me to violate the natural right of the Belgians to navigate the principal river in their country.

2^{dly}, England, at the time of making this treaty, had a representation so imperfect, that the treaty could not in fact and truth be the true expression of the nation's will and consent.

3^{dly}, Until I know of an actual demand made on behalf of the Dutch, and expressed by representatives

"This, however, is the state of Europe, as a community of nations connected by treaties."

Williams's Lec. on Pol. Prin. 121.

A Treatise on this subject by the present king of Poland, might be an acceptable present to the civilized world.

actually

actually to demand the fulfilment of our engagement under this treaty, then I shall think the true merits of it ought to be fully and fairly discussed in England, before an answer be given.

4thly, Supposing such a demand ever should be made, I shall then suppose that to deprive the Belgians of the use of the finest river and the grand sea-port of their country, would be convenient to Holland.

freely chosen by that nation, for England to fulfil her engagement, I shall not think that Englishmen need to trouble themselves about the treaty at all; except to disapprove of its fulfilment, until such a demand have been made.

4thly, Supposing such a demand ever should be made, the moral obligation of not shedding man's blood, of not plunging my country into the horrors of war, and of not entailing on future generations of Englishmen insufferable debts and taxes, in my mind so infinitely outweigh the reasons on the other side, that neither my voice nor my money will voluntarily be given for entering into the proposed war.

Had the Armed Neutrality thought it convenient that the Navy of England should have been annihilated, and the port of London, with the navigation of the Thames, forbidden in future to any vessel bigger than a fishing smack; had that Armed Neutrality, in conjunction with our other numerous enemies, contrived to have executed such an equitable plan; and, in order to secure the point, had put the mighty Catherine in possession of the forts of Tilbury and Gravesend, with the adjacent counties, under a guarantee on the parts of France, Spain, Hol-

land, and America; what would Englishmen now think of the validity of such a Treaty?

But if there be not cause enough for war in the Dutch Treaty, there is the French murder yet to be brought into the account. "Although the French Constitution had rendered the king's person inviolable; and although the highest punishment which it annexed to the greatest crimes he could commit, was the forfeiture of his crown, the Convention, centering in itself the characters of accuser, judge, and jury, have taken away his life." I have but little attended to the arguments against inviolability, or to those which went to shew that, by implication, a sentence of death might be passed. Where man's life is concerned, and national honour is at stake, sophisms should be rejected. Besides, I am amongst those who entertain doubts as to the competency of human authority, in any case whatever, deliberately to punish with death. In this particular case, I can the less excuse it; as, so far from having been necessary or prudent, it seems to have been in the highest degree impolitic. And when I reflect on the disservice it is likely to do to the cause of freedom, which I must ever hold to be the cause of virtue and of man, most sincerely do I lament it. The true cause of this event I can no where discover, but in the mean, revengeful, murderous

derous spirit of a small faction, the demagogues of an ignorant rabble, contaminated by all the vices which in a succession of ages grow out of DESPOTISM, in a vicious and overgrown capital ; a faction who are a disgrace to human kind, and the enemies to true freedom, as being the enemies to justice, to humanity, and virtue. How so many of the Convention could be drawn, or rather driven into the views of those men who thirsted for the king's blood, I can only account for, from the feebleness of human reason, while under the agitations of fear and other violent passions. Men but just emerged from the darkness of despotic government, and whose resentments towards it were yet exquisitely felt, could not be in so dispassionate a temper, nor have their judgments so ripened on the true principles of jurisprudence, as if they had been more fortunate in their political education : and men whose own lives were threatened with the poignard, might be induced to overlook some of those forms and fences of law set up to guard the life of another ; such especially as really thought the king criminal, might be the less scrupulous in this particular.

The virtue and magnanimity, however, of that considerable number whose votes were for saving the king's life, will be their lasting praise, notwithstanding their voice was borne down by the voice of the major-

rity, which made the death of the king the act of the Convention. That act, if unauthorized by the law, or by the constitution, or by necessity, as appears to have been the case, was, doubtless, murder. But, if the Convention, representing all France, did wrong in assuming at once the offices of judge and jury over the king, accused by a prior body of men, also representing the whole people, with treason against the state, surely the people of England, who have received no injury, would do equally wrong in assuming the offices of judges and jury, how much soever they may think proper to make themselves the accusers of the French Convention. Let them then, if they think good, accuse that Convention to those to whom it is responsible; but let them not, for an act of that Convention, in which they have no concern, be so absurd as to make war upon the whole people of France.

If the French Convention, in taking away a single life, *unjustly* and *unnecessarily* have stained itself with the foul crime of murder; for Heaven's sake let not us plunge *unjustly* and *unnecessarily* into WAR, which would be to carry on the trade of human butchery and murder by wholesale!

Rather than make war upon the people of France, let us leave the Convention to make reparation to justice, by smiting the criminal faction that has caused its dishonour; by acts of rigour against the infamous assassins

lins of the 2d of September, by *removing its seat of government from Paris*; and finally, by presenting to France a Constitution of Government worthy of the close of the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile let the arts of peace flourish amongst us, enriching and adorning our country; a present blessing, and, next to a pure government, the surest means of securing future prosperity!

Before we permit our own rulers, under the pretexs of *a violated treaty* and *an act of wickedness* amongst the rulers of France, to involve us in a war against the French People, and "French Principles," it may be worth while to consider the company which these very consistent ministers mean us to keep on the occasion. When we look to *the three leaders* of the confederacy and reflect, not only on the *former partition of Poland*, but on the present state of that miserable nation, a prey to those three wolves, with what reverence must we be inspired for such honest, worthy respecters of treaties and the rights of mankind—for such true friends to liberty under a limited monarch!—for such admirers of a constitution of *king, lords, and commons*, as settled in Poland at the glorious revolution of 1791!—and how cordially must we co-operate with the maintainers of the political and pious principles declared in the manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick!—When ministers propose to a
nation,

nation, lovers of justice and freedom, such a confederacy in such a cause, surely it must be in mockery! Who, but such patterns of consistency, when they called on us to revenge *the murder of a king*, would desire us to associate with a woman who stands charged with that very crime!—with having in the course of a few days, hurled from his throne her husband and sovereign lord, seized his crown, and taken away his life in prison *!—Is it in such company that we are to sacrifice to the manes of murdered kings!

* See Guthrie's Geographical Grammar, article *Russia*, and under the head of *History*.

The very uncommon delay which has accidentally attended the publication of this pamphlet, has afforded the author an opportunity of adding to this reference to *Russian History*, an extract from a *Russian Edict* of February the 8th, published in the Morning of the 29th of March.

“ Now that more than seven hundred monsters have been found, who have abused the power they had arrogated to themselves by the most criminal means, and that to such an extent as to lay their paracidal hands on the life of the Lord's anointed, of their lawful master, cruelly and inhumanly immolated, on the 10th of January last, we think ourselves bound by God and *our conscience*, until the justice of the Most High shall have confounded the authors of so horrible a crime, and it shall have pleased his holy will to terminate the calamities by which France is now afflicted, not to permit, between our empire and that kingdom, any of the relations which subsist between civilized and legitimately constituted states. We, in consequence, order, &c.”

What a happy circumstance it is for Poland, that the Empress of Russia has a conscience!

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When the event to which I allude took place, none of the crowned heads on the continent troubled themselves about the matter. It was sufficient, it seems, that the wide range of despotism was in no wise abridged; and that the chasm in royalty was instantly filled up, although it was by her who stood charged with having made it. No one of them enquired what was the crime of the deceased, who was his accuser, who his judge, or who his jury; what was the form of his trial, or whom he had allowed him to plead in his defence. Neither were the people of England, on the ridiculous plea of combating *Russian Principles*, then taught, that such an event ought to make them cast away with contempt the blessings of peace, to seize by a frantic choice on the curses of war. Peace and commerce between the two nations went on as usual, to their mutual emolument and satisfaction. On that murdering business, *mum* was the word through every European court; the *change* was duly notified; *ambassadors were received*; and all things went on in their usual routine. But no sooner was despotism *only* removed in France, than a conspiracy of kings was instantly formed for its reinstatement; and now that a chasm in royalty has also taken place in that country, to fill it up again is thought to be cause sufficient for spilling the blood of all Europe. Although, my friend, in England, I think we
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do well and rightly to retain and support a constitution with *king* and *nobles*, because it is our constitution, because we prefer it to other forms, and because, if purified of its corruption, it may preserve our liberties; yet surely it must be the effect of a prejudice the most violent, and the excess of political bigotry and persecution, to make war upon a people for abolishing certain forms that we choose to retain!—‘O! but what say you to *French Principles*?’—Why, this I say: that I observe malignant misrepresentation, artifice and error without end, employed to alarm us where, in my judgment, there is no cause for alarm; to blind us to the true relative situation of the two countries; and to hurry us to an *unjust* and *unnecessary* war,—a war of which we shall bitterly repent, as soon as we come to our sober senses. If from the maxims of our gamblers and swindlers; from the language of our brothels, night-cellars, and jails; from the daily politics of our prostitute newspapers; and from the speeches and writings of our modern Filmers; the French were to collect a farrago of extravagance, dishonesty, impiety, and despotism, and call it a collection of *English Principles*, we should not think very highly of their liberality or candour. By *English Principles*, I presume are meant, the genuine principles of the English Constitution. It is therefore in the French Constitution alone, that we
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are to look for French Principles. What they are will be seen in the margin*. Let them speak for themselves. Nor do I think so ill of the Convention, as not to believe that

* This note was intended to have exhibited the Declaration of Rights of 1791; but a new one having appeared since this work went to the press, it seems but right to insert it in this place, instead of the Declaration first intended. It is as follows:

Declaration of the Natural, Civil, and Political Rights of Men.

The object of all union of men in society, being the maintaining of natural, civil, and political rights, these rights ought to be the basis of the social compact. The acknowledgment and declaration of them ought to precede the constitution which assures the guarantee of them.

I. The natural, civil, and political rights of men are, liberty, equality, security, property, the social guarantee, and resistance of oppression.

II. Liberty consists in the power of doing whatever is not contrary to the rights of others: Thus the exercise of the natural rights of every man has no bounds, but those which secure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights.

III. The conservation of liberty depends on submission to the law, which is the expression of the general will. Whatever is not forbidden by the law cannot be hindered; and no one can be constrained to do what it does not ordain.

IV. Every man is free to manifest his thoughts and his opinions.

V. The liberty of the press, or any other mode of publishing his thoughts, can neither be interdicted, nor suspended, nor limited,

VI. Every citizen is free in the exercise of his worship.

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VII.

that he who should offer them a real amendment on any of these principles, would receive

VII. Equality consists in this, that every one may enjoy the same rights.

VIII. The law ought to be equal for all, whether it rewards or punishes ; whether it protects or represses.

IX. All the citizens are admissible to all public places, employments and functions. People that are free acknowledge no motives of preference, but talents and virtues.

X. Security consists in the protection granted by the society to every citizen for the conservation of his person, of his property, and of his rights.

XI. No one can be tried, accused, apprehended, or detained, but in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms which it has prescribed. Every other act exercised against a citizen is arbitrary and null.

XII. Those who shall solicit, expedite, sign, execute, or cause to be executed, these arbitrary acts, are culpable, and ought to be punished.

XIII. The citizens against whom it shall be attempted to execute such acts, have the right to repel force by force ; but every citizen summoned, or seized by the authority of the law, and in the forms prescribed by it, ought instantly to obey : he renders himself culpable by resistance.

XIV. Every man being presumed innocent till he has been declared guilty, if it be judged indispensable to apprehend him, all rigour, not necessary for securing his person, ought to be severely repressed by the law.

XV. No one ought to be punished, but by virtue of a law established, promulgated anterior to the offence, and legally applied.

XVI. The law which should punish offences committed before its existence, would be an arbitrary act. The retrospective effect given to the law is a crime.

XVII. The law ought to pronounce only punishments strictly and evidently necessary to the general security. They ought to be proportioned to offences, and useful to the society.

XVIII. The right of property consists in this :—that every

ceive a tribute of their sincere acknowledgements.

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every man has the power to dispose at his pleasure, of his effects, of his capital, of his revenues, and his industry.

XIX. No kind of labour, of commerce, of culture, can be forbidden him : he may manufacture, sell, and transport every species of production.

XX. Every man may engage his services, his time ; but he cannot sell himself : his person is not alienable property.

XXI. No one can be deprived of the least portion of his property without his consent, except when public necessity, legally proved, evidently requires it ; and on condition of a just and previous indemnity.

XXII. No contribution can be established but for the general utility, and to supply the public wants. All the citizens have the right to concur personally or by their representatives, in the establishment of contributions.

XXIII. Elementary instruction is the want of all ; and the society owes it equally to all its members.

XXIV. Public succours are a sacred debt of the society ; and it belongs to the law to determine the extent and application of them.

XXV. The social guarantee of these rights rests on the National Sovereignty.

XXVI. This sovereignty is one, indivisible, imprescriptible, and inalienable.

XXVII. It resides essentially in the whole people, and every citizen has the equal right to concur in the exercise of it.

XXVIII. No partial union of citizens, and no individual, can arrogate the sovereignty, nor exercise any authority, nor fill any function, without a formal delegation of the law.

XXIX. The social guarantee cannot exist, where the limits of the public functions are not clearly determined by the law ; and where the responsibility of all the public functionaries is not assured.

XXX. All the citizens are bound to concur in this guarantee ;

As the collective wisdom of mankind, thus made the basis of a state, must, after the convulsions incident to all great revolutions have subsided, and where the people are

rantee; and to give force to the law, when they are called upon in its name.

XXXI. Men united in society ought to have a legal means of resisting oppression.

XXXII. It is oppression when a law violates the natural, civil, and political rights, which it ought to guarantee. It is oppression when the law is violated by the public functionaries, in its application to individual facts. It is oppression when arbitrary acts violate the rights of citizens, against the expression of the law.

In every free government the mode of resistance to these different acts of oppression ought to be regulated by the law.

XXXIII. A people have always the right to revise, to reform, and to change their Constitution. One generation has not the right to subject future generations to its laws, and every thing hereditary in the functions is absurd and tyrannical.

Hitherto has Despotism, by the necessity of its nature, been obliged to hoodwink its victims, and to overshadow the human understanding with all the darkness which the circumstances of the time and place rendered possible; as the only means of trampling with security on the natural, civil, political, and religious rights of man. It is the peculiar discovery of Mr. *Burke*, and his ministerial pupils, that the Convention of France mean to cheat their own countrymen, and the neighbouring nations, into slavery and misery, by giving them *light*; to rob them of every blessing in social life, by a free communication of *knowledge* on the principles of the social union, commonly called civil government; and to bend them under the yoke of oppression, by laying the foundations of government in a *free and annual choice of their rulers!!!*

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are actually in possession of the rights of election and representation, become the settled principles and practices of government, what is it, I want to know, that *man-kind* has to dread from the diffusion of French Principles? Or what has *our* government to dread from them, if it be intended that the people of Great Britain ever shall possess and enjoy those rights of election and representation, which are the very vital spark and soul of their constitution? But if, my dear Sir, it be the fixed and rooted determination of our rulers, that we never shall enjoy

The two systems, each supported by mighty hosts, are now at issue. Were armies composed only of wolves and tygers; were countries peopled only with unreasoning brutes; and were Providence nothing but a superintendence of fiends; then, indeed, all human faculties and feelings being out of the question, we might expect darkness to prevail over light; force and ferocity to subdue knowledge and truth; and despotism to ride triumphant over fallen freedom. But while of MEN are the interested nations composed; while by the toil and sweat of MEN are the armies to be maintained; while MEN on both sides are to be the fighters; and while, according to the system which shall prove victorious, MEN are likewise to look forward for their future happiness or misery under government;—when these circumstances, I say, are considered, the friends of human kind may indeed drop a tear over the bloody though temporary effects of partial DELUSION; but, with respect to the final issue of the contest, they can have nothing to fear; provided they believe that the reason, the feelings and affections of man were not given him in vain; but were the beneficent gift of his Creator, to bring about in due time the gracious purposes of his providence, for the improvement and happiness of our species.

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those rights so long as they can by any means withhold them, then, indeed, I can clearly comprehend the meaning of all this cry, and all the calumnies that circulate about French Principles. Then, indeed, I can also understand the policy, *to them*, of uniting with the ravagers of Poland in a war against France. It might have been reasonably hoped that the calamities brought upon us by attempting to force upon America a system of government repugnant to her sentiments, had cured us of these follies. But melancholy experience shews but too plainly, that until A REFORMED REPRESENTATION shall secure us from abuse, there will be no end in England to the empire of delusion. An uncontrouled minister, with endless channels of imposition at his command, with hired newspapers, and thousands of dependents and expectants to assist in poisoning the public mind, and with the inexhaustible means of corruption in his hands, has such infinite advantage over a few faithful sentinels of the public, that it is no way surprizing the latter are not attended to, until the day of calamity and repentance arrives: and that in the mean time, such a minister should triumph over justice, reason, and sound national policy.

APPENDIX.

THE friend to whom this letter is addressed, having seen the manuscript, (the postscript and a few corrections only excepted) returned it to me with the following amongst other remarks, with permission to subjoin them to the letter.

“ There remains one considerable objection to your Reforming Scheme, viz. that in the room of what is bad, you do not say what you would give us. Do you mean to palliate, or to extirpate, the disorders in the representation (1)? Any thing short of the following scheme seems to me only a palliation:—As *Life* and *Liberty* are each more valuable than *Property*; therefore, every man of sound mind, not a *convicted* criminal, and of a certain age, should be both an elector and *eligible*. Aye, and every *woman* too: for as God has given them reason, who shall say that they ought not to exercise it on this as on other subjects?

“ Tell me, my good friend, whether any thing less than this would not be an *arbitrary* Reform, resting upon no solid principles (2)?

“ But

" But what conclusion do *I* draw? Not—
 " that the present mode of Representation
 " should never be *amended*: But—that its
 " Amendment should be slow and progres-
 " sive; every step that is taken being found
 " *firm*, before another step is ventured on;
 " every step that proves inconvenient being
 " instantly withdrawn; leaning upon expe-
 " rience, and distrusting experiment (3).
 " In short, this grand foederation should
 " be the work of an age (4), and not of
 " one or two Sessions of Parliament: and
 " after all, (like every thing human) it will
 " remain a very imperfect work.

" I still hope that you will, in some part
 " of your pamphlet, execrate the French
 " principle of—Murder for Liberty, no
 " crime (5). I have sometimes shuddered
 " to hear Englishmen say, that the *first*
 " Revolution in France was accomplished
 " with as little unfair bloodshed as possible.
 " If you or I, my friend, could procure
 " perfect liberty to all the world, by mur-
 " dering one innocent man, I trust we
 " should decline the *glorious* and *immortal*
 " work (6).

" If you agree with my *last* paragraph, and
 " do not like a long postscript, make *that*
 " your postscript."

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[The following are Notes upon the Extract from Mr. Partridge's Letter.]

(1) When my friend shall have done me the honour to read some of those Essays which I have published on this subject, he will see that this objection is unfounded. In "*The People's Barrier*" I have given a plan in detail; and one which I conceive would, if passed into a law, "extirpate the disorders in the representation."—But all that I *at present* aim at, is to induce him and every other conscientious Associator, to unite in praying the House of Commons to take the matter into its consideration; in order that the best remedy for the disorders in question may be adopted.

(2) The claims of women certainly are not quite so strong as those of men. In complete citizenship, burthen and benefit, duties and rights go hand in hand. It is the duty of a male citizen to bear arms in defence of the state and of the public peace; and, when necessary, to fight for the liberties of his country. Notwithstanding some few Amazonian examples of these duties being performed by the other sex, it seems to be a law of nature that females in general are incapable of these duties. There are other duties too appertaining to the government of nations, for which they do not seem qualified. But perhaps it will be too much to infer, that, because women are not fit for the duties of the firelock, and other stations in society more properly occupied by men, they ought therefore to be denied the right of chusing their political guardians. When orphans, and even at a tender age, the law allows to them chuse their legal guardians. Mistresses of families choose their own servants; and female servants their own employers. God also allows them to judge of the means of their own eternal salvation. Seeing then that they are in possession of this noblest exercise of reason, I do not see a necessity for excluding them from the means of choosing political protectors. As it is certain that free election chiefly depends on these two circumstances, viz. that the body of electors be *numerous*, and the term of power bestowed be *short*; it is evident that

the introduction of female citizenship would greatly strengthen one of these pillars of freedom.

I am aware that Scripture has its texts, not favourable to female dominion; but so very little of dominion comes to the share of each individual elector in the state, that in elections, pure and peaceable as they ought to be, and might be, it may be difficult to maintain a solid objection to female votes.

(3) I shall ever distrust any thing, and every thing, but **THE CONSTITUTION**. If that constitution *be not adequate to the purpose*, it is no constitution; it is worse than none; it is a cheat; it is the mere empty puffing hand-bill of impostors.

But I will maintain that the principles of that constitution, fairly and honestly applied, will remove every difficulty. If the **PEOPLE** are now associating for that which, instead of securing to the *commons* their proper constitutional share in the government, is to cut up that share and to divide it between the crown and the peerage in addition to what belongs to them, the defects of such a constitution, and the insatiation of such a conduct, must speedily bring on a catastrophe that need not be pointed out: but if the constitution be indeed deserving of those praises of it which now echo through the land, it will enable us to repel the encroachments already made on our liberties by the crown and the lords, and to settle them on a lasting foundation.

(4) Great part of an age has already been spent by the friends of their country, in only *recommending* such a reform to the notice of their fellow-citizens. If a whole age will be necessary for completing the work itself, it is high time we began. I am convinced, however, that my friend, upon more fully investigating this question, will find himself in an error, respecting a supposed necessity for a *slow gradual* reform. In the English constitution, as in the Christian Scripture, happy is it for the people that in what respects the doctrines of *salvation*, he who runs may read. Scripture, it is true, has its abstruse questions and its sublimities, for exercising the minds of the highly enlightened. And so has the science of government its difficulties and refinements, for the exercise of genius, and for

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promoting refinements in the condition of society. But in both religion and politics, the goodness of our Creator is particularly conspicuous, in placing salvation within the reach of the poor and illiterate, who are required only to comprehend very plain things, and to act upon them. In free election, and in a true and an uncorrupt representation, lies the whole secret of political safety; and how to produce such elections and such a representation requires only common sense.

(5) As none of the calumnies upon myself, which occasioned my taking up the pen, charged me, so far as I know, with maintaining or defending so abominable a principle; and as, besides my own vindication, my sole purpose was to reason with the associators on the nature and extent of the business in which they had embarked; viz. *to support our own constitution on its true principles, and to preserve public tranquility*; it would never, I believe, have occurred to me, to have said a word on the subject of what has so recently passed in a neighbouring country, had not my friend expressed a wish that I would take the opportunity of bearing my testimony against the murderous principles which have there been exhibited. It was in consequence of that suggestion, that I was led to turn my thoughts that way, and that I wrote what appears in the Postscript respecting the Dutch treaty, and the murder of the French king, as motives held up to us for entering upon a war.

Although I must ever reject vicious means for bringing about virtuous ends, as utterly unjustifiable; and must of course execrate on such occasions crimes so foul as murder; yet I can see no other purpose likely to be answered by taking pains at the present moment to fix the attention of Englishmen on the unhappy and unjust fate of the late French king; and by dilating on the melancholy subject as some have done; than to work up the passions of the public for the horrid business of war; and *to divert their minds from a reform in their own government*. As a religious sense of duty to my country would make me look on such a war with horror and detestation; and on such a reform as the most godlike work in which we can now engage; so I must wish for the present

sent rather to throw a veil over all those acts which have disgraced the new-born freedom of France, than officially to hold them forth to the view of my countrymen.

6. My reverend friend may be assured that I do not think so lightly of the great moral system of the Deity, as to imagine that any of us can promote that universal liberty, peace, and happiness of man, which that moral system duly attended to would produce on earth, by an intentional violation of the system in any of its essential principles; much less in a violation that, by a sort of instinct amongst civilized men, is peculiarly shocking to humanity. He may also be assured that an attention to *politics* with me, is not a mere habit, or fashion, or amusement, like hunting, cards, or the like; nor a matter of personal or party attachment. Where science or morality are concerned, the true principles of either ought to be the objects of our attachment. When we consider that from no other source than a knowledge in the science of civil government, can be derived a system rightly adapted to promote the temporal security, prosperity, and comfort of man; and that on such system also even his *morals* in a very high degree must depend, so I cannot but consider an attention to politics, and an endeavour to free our system of government from whatever is dishonest and pernicious, as amongst our religious duties to God, as well as to our neighbour; in which view of them I am sure my friend will concur with me.



THE END.

